

The Present Condition of the Negro

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I PRESUME, as I look over this gathering, that we did not come for play. When I lived down in Tennessee there was an old man who prayed, "O Lord, send some people just to look after us." And another old man said "Amen"; and he



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said, "Lord, you come and look after this yourself. This is no child's play."

Mr. Hartshorn came to my house, and I did not know much about him. We were talking before we knew it. I was very busy and was just filled up with work, and I was brief and knew it. My son lectured me when Mr. Hartshorn was gone and said that I hurt Mr. Hartshorn's feelings. I prayed over it and wanted to write and tell him I was sorry.

When we talk of the real conditions of the Negro, if we are going to do any good, we ought to talk about it. I take it we are here to talk about the religious condition as it is to-day. I know something about the Negro Baptists all over the United States, and especially in the South.

"I Had One of the Same Kind"

May I digress to say that long before you got your New Idea movement in Sunday-schools, I had one of that same kind? I suppose I am the first Negro Baptist in the South that succeeded in getting southern white teachers in my Sunday-school. Mr. Robinson Fayles (Mrs. Fayles is sister of John Wanamaker) came to my church and taught an afternoon Sunday-school. We talk of it very often now. I have three or four at work for me now. For three years we have had an afternoon Sunday-school.

Permit me to say that the religious condition of the Negro is very good. There are quite a number more Sunday-schools than churches. We can reach the Negro through the Sunday-school as in no other way.

"We Are Going to Control Our Own People"

I said to Mr. Hartshorn, "You went after it wrong." The time has not come when we Baptists are purposing to give over to any other people. We are not going to give it over to the white people. We are going to control our own people.

Now, I have some facts here to prove that to you. Of course they thought me crazy when I started out. The American Baptist Home Missionary Society thought I was an enemy, and they did not know where to put me down because I could not conscientiously consent that they take it away from us. I fought it out on the ground that we ought to keep it ourselves.

Finally the Convention came to me to start this work, as I had succeeded in so many other things, but I never would have been picked if anybody would have had it. Nobody would have the place, so it was given to me. There is not another colored man who would have had it but me, so I just took it because that was the only thing for anybody to get. So I went to the heart of the South and started.

In Deep Sympathy with Southern Whites

Now, I am in deep sympathy with the southern white folk. When I started out I was seriously in doubt as to whether the white Baptist church was right or not. When I got into the work, I began to study it carefully, and I said, "No, I am going to look at this from the white man's standpoint"; and, do you know, I was severely criticised and was even called "Frost's nigger." I tell you that I am fully convinced that the southern white people of our denomination (I will refer to the Baptists because I know more about them than any other) are honestly, in their souls, ready and willing to better the religious condition of the Negro, and work to that end. I believe that common sense teaches us that they ought to help us up. If they don't pull the Negro up, the Negro will pull them down.

There Must Be a Movement Somewhere

There has to be a movement somewhere. I am drawn to believe that in your educational methods you have made a mistake sometimes. Sometimes you educate down. You thought you could do a thing and you educated us away from our own people and then you got us no nearer the white people. The southern white people were afraid of that very thing. They did not know how to get at it, and they went about it the wrong way. They will give more money to-day than we can profitably spend